

REMARKS

Claims 1-22 were pending, claims 1-4, 12-14, 16, 17 and 20 stand rejected, and claims 5-11, 15, 18, 19, 21 and 22 stand objected to. By virtue of this response, claims 15, 18, 21, and 22 have been cancelled, claims 1, 4, 12, and 16 have been amended, and new claims 23 and 24 have been added. Amendment to the claims and new claims 23 and 24 are fully supported by the claims as originally presented and no new matter has been added. Accordingly, claims 1-14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 23, and 24 are currently under consideration.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 5-11, 15, and 18-19 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. As indicated herein, Applicants have amended all pending independent claims to include features of those claims indicated to be allowable. In particular, independent claims 1, 12, 16, and 23 have been amended or newly added to include features of claims indicated by the Examiner to be allowable (as well as any intervening claims). Accordingly, Applicants submit that all claims are now in immediate condition for allowance.

Duplicate Claims

Claims 21 and 22 stand objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 as being a substantial duplicate of Claim 20. In response, Applicants have cancelled claims 21 and 22.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC §102

Claims 1-4, 12-13, 16-17, and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Yokoyama et al. (Yokoyama)

Claims 1, 12, and 16 have been amended to include features indicated by the Examiner to be allowable. In particular, claim 1 includes features similar to claims 4 and 5; claim 12 includes features similar to claim 15, and claim 16 includes features similar to claim 18, where claims 5, 15, and 18 were all indicated to be allowable if rewritten into independent form including the features of the base claim and intervening claims. Additionally, newly added claim 23 includes features similar to original claims 1 and 6, where claim 6 was also indicated to be allowable.

Accordingly, Applicants request withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of independent claims 1, 12, 16, and 23 and all claims depending therefrom.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC §103

Claim 14 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Yokoyama in view of Chliwnyj et al. (Chliwnyj).

Claim 14 depends from claim 12, which as indicated above is believed to now be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants request for withdrawal of the rejection and allowance of claims 14.

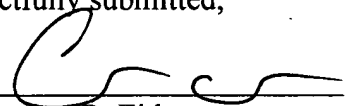
CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicant petitions for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 249212019900. However, the Commissioner is not authorized to charge the cost of the issue fee to the Deposit Account.

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Respectfully submitted,

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